



Statement at the opening of the Meeting of the  
Russian Society for Ecological Economics  
RSEE-2017,  
Petrozavodsk, July 4, 2017

**Clóvis Cavalcanti**

It is a great honor to greet you as International Program Committee Co-chairman of the RSEE-2017 and ISEE President-Elect.

Having participated at RSEE-2013 in Irkutsk, I developed a great appreciation for you, my dear fellow Colleagues from this big and admirable country. I owe this to a great extent, I have to say, to my friendship with Paul Safonov, a good representative of ecological economics thinking. He treated me with much attention and affection in Siberia. Unfortunately, I could not get the necessary support to travel to Petrozavodsk, a place that I would very much like to visit. I am sure that during the conference you will do your best to promote this field of work that was created in the 1980s. RSEE-2017 is a precious opportunity to achieve progress in this process. We need to demonstrate that ecological economics is a path to a saner, sustainable world.

I consider the invitation for me to co-chair RSEE-2017's International Program Committee, first of all, as a sign of affection. And affection, dear Colleagues and Friends, seems to me the great strength, the cement of ecological economics (and of an ecological economy): affection for our fellow human beings, affection for the beauty of Nature, love for life. This is why we challenge so strongly the prevailing concept of development which puts continuous economic growth – a biophysical impossibility in the first place – before anything else. The inspiring contribution of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen has shown conclusively that to speak of infinite growth in a finite planet, to use his expression, is “a graceless tautology”. Of course, we want development. But growth is another thing – a beast that its worshippers want to camouflage with a green dye. Disgracefully, people from the “brown economy” are very powerful. It is they who finance – and corrupt – governments, who get votes, who manage political parties, so it is not easy and wise to ignore them.

I am fully convinced that growth is a myth. Our affection for humanity should lead us to think on improving the human condition. This is the task I conceive for ecological economics. We need sustainable development or prosperity. We do not want to see our world collapsing. We love life. We want to preserve nature for our descendants. In a lecture that Wendell Berry, an admirable American poet, gave in 2012 he said that “it is in affection that we find the possibility of a neighborly, kind, and conserving economy”. The concept of sustainability, according to Berry, requires that “the fertility cycle of birth, growth, maturity, death, and decay ... should turn continuously in place ... so that nothing is wasted”. Berry explains that “For this to happen in the stewardship of humans, there must be a cultural cycle in harmony with the fertility cycle”. Berry concludes: “The fertility cycle turns by the law of nature. The cultural cycle turns on affection”.

I wish RSEE-2017 assumes the profile of a humane enterprise turning on affection. And let us not forget that, above and below the earth, everything rusts, decays, becomes waste.

Have a good conference!